

Friends of NSFC in Obama's cabinet

On 15 December, 2008, the US President-Elect Obama Picked Steven Chu for Energy Secretary.

Steven Chu is an old friend of NSFC. On May 4, 1998, he attended a reception of Nobel Prize winners in Beijing hosted by the National Natural Science Foundation of China. The following photos were taken at the meeting.

Steven Chu's parents were from Taicang County in Jiangsu Province, China. They went to study in the US after they graduated from Tsinghua University in Beijing. Steven Chu was born in St. Louis, Missouri in 1948. He was the director of Berkeley Lab (A U.S. Department of Energy National Laboratory Operated by the University of California), and won the Nobel Prize for physics in 1997.

After that he came to China several times to attend academic meetings and activities. He came to the NSFC's meeting after attending the centennial anniversary celebration of Peking University with other Nobel Prize laureates and Fields Prize winners the same day.

(Yuan Youxin)



Prof. Steven Chu and Zhang Cunhao, the President of NSFC, at the meeting Professor Zhang Cunhao is a member of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, and a well known physical chemists in China.



Prof. Steven Chu and Shi Changxu, a special advisor to NSFC. Professor Shi Changxu is a member of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, and a well known material scientist in China.



Prof. Steven Chu and Sun Shu, Vice President of NSFC. Professor Sun Shu is a member of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, and a well known geologist in China.



Prof. Steven Chu and Zhang Xinshi, Vice President of NSFC. Professor Zhang Xinshi is a member of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, and a well known ecological botanist in China.

Asian Regional Scientific Collaboration in the Era of Globalization

--Speech on the Second Meeting of the Asian Heads of Research Councils*

Shen Wenqing **

Mr. Chairman,

All of the distinguished participants,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am very delighted to be here together with all of you from research councils and science funding institutions in Asian countries and share views on the promotion of scientific collaboration in the region.

First of all, I wish, on behalf of the National Natural Science Foundation of China, to extend my congratulation on the opening of the second meeting of the Asian Heads of the Research Councils and appreciations for all efforts provided by the JSPS to the initiation and promotion of the meeting.

In regard to the themes of this meeting, I would like to share my views and suggestions on the regional scientific collaboration.

According to the statistics of 2007 by the Asia Bank, the GDP of the Asian countries is occupied 35% of the world's total and the incremental production made 50% of the contribution to the world's total production. At the same time, Asia is now playing a significant role in the science and technology innovation of the world in terms of R&D investment, human resources and scientific output.

It is concurrently well known that a number of challenges are mutually faced by Asian countries. Asia is a heavily inhabited area with the population of more than 2.6 billions with 60% of agricultural population which is occupied 58% of the world's. The total area of the land is 30% only of the world's and heavily impacted by natural disasters of high frequency like flooding and drought, earth quake and cyclone as well. Asia is also diversified and imbalanced in terms of culture, the development of the economy and S&T.

It is therefore very clear that the regional cooperation and coordination is the only way to face these common challenges and enjoy development in the era of globalization. For Asian countries, we may share our knowledge and S&T resources to mutually deal with the issues in the field of agriculture, energy, global change and disaster prevention. Scientific communities of the Asian countries will be able to make their contribution for overcoming challenges and the development in Asia and the world as well.

I am a physicist working on high energy physics in the Chinese Academy of Sciences. I know very well from my research experiences that international and regional collaboration is critical significance to S&T activities.

I would like here to brief the National Natural Science Foundation of China, as the major science funding agency in China in terms of funding policy and international strategy.

Three categories of programs are now available in the foundation for Chinese scientific community pertaining to research promotion, talent training and infrastructure establishment. Totally about 80,000 proposals are annually received and 10,000 of them could be funded by the foundation. During the Eleventh Five Year Plan

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** Vice president of the National Natural Science Foundation of China

(2006-2010), the foundation will arrange further funding for 1800 key projects and 30 major projects in the frontier and priority areas, as well as 15 research plans which is more focused on the multidiscipline and across discipline studies. As for the talents training, the funding from the foundation gives high priorities not only for the senior scientists but also for the junior and young scientists. Annually about 4,000 research projects for young scientist and 180 research projects for distinguished young scholars are supported. The foundation provides also funds for R&D projects for scientific instruments, activities for public understanding of science and science journals as well.

It is even more important to say that the foundation has been dedicating to promote international scientific collaboration, participate in regional and international research activities and encourage Chinese scientists to be active partners in the global and regional S&T innovation.

Totally 67 agreements and MOUs have been signed between the foundation and funding agencies and research institutions of foreign countries which provide joint funding for personal exchange, joint workshops and joint research projects.

The foundation has been encouraging Chinese scientists to tackle regional and global issues and participate in bilateral and multilateral collaborations. A number of research projects, which are either funded by the foundation or jointly funded with international counterparts, are organized with the significance of regional and global. For instance, the study of global change and regional response in China, the utilization of energy and environmental protection in western part of China, the study of dynamic catastrophe of big construction, the modern study of traditional Chinese medicine and the study of epigenetics, and so on.

Science collaboration in Asia has huge potential issues and areas with wide prospects which will be beneficial for all participants. I believe that we could seize the opportunity and deepen regional cooperation. NSFC appreciates the initiation of JSPS to organize the meeting of the Asian Heads of Research Councils and believes that the mechanism will play important role in the coordination of science policy making, the setting of research priorities and promotion of the scientific cooperation in the region.

NSFC is confident that the ASIAHORCs is able to further strengthen coordination and work in more close cooperation to make new and greater progress in the S&T development of the region. The future of the regional scientific cooperation will be definitely mutual beneficial for all scientific communities of Asian countries. In this regards, I would like to make four suggestions for promoting mutual understanding and exploring more opportunities for further regional collaboration.

First, strength exchanges among the heads of scientific communities in the region. It is necessary for them to share funding policy and regional cooperative strategy and review collaboration from the angle of strategic and regional perspective. It is proposed that more different level of regional forums and strategic dialogues could be jointly organized among the funding agency and scientific community in the region to gain an objective understanding and coordination of each other's policy, which will provide more opportunities for further collaborations in the key areas such as agriculture, disaster prevention, public health and environmental and energy issues as well, and to identify new areas for stimulating regional and international collaborations.

ASIAHORCs should be a regional science forum which may provide a platform to share the development and policy of science funding and explore new opportunities for regional collaboration for Asia countries. Chinese side would like to participate in such regional dialogues and communications among science funding agencies and research institutions, and share views on the mutual interested issues of science and technology in the region.

Second, strengthen the concert regional collaboration in the areas which are mutually interested and significant to the development of economy and society of Asian countries. The establishment and development of Asia S&T community may rests on regional cooperation in the form of programs in various vertical areas. To spread S&T capability and prosperity in Asia, we must strengthen practical cooperation in mutual interested

areas and give top priority to co-operation in the aforementioned areas.

I am confident that the continuous growth of regional cooperative partnership will provide a larger platform on which the scientists of Asian countries can pursue mutual benefit in win-win cooperation. However, legislative system and funding mechanism are various among Asian countries. It is sure that the regional collaboration in the areas of science and technology is a challenging and difficult issue in terms of intellectual property right, joint evaluation, budgeting sharing and so on. As one of the active participants of the S&T cooperation of the region, the foundation would like to discuss with all parties and is committed to encourage Chinese scientific community both academically and financially to work together with their counterparts of Asian countries in the regional collaboration.

It is necessary to bring our respective strengths into full play during the regional collaboration and draw upon each other's strengths of resources through cooperation for achieving common development. The foundation would like to discuss in detail for establishing a cooperative mechanism to fully utilize various regional S&T resources for regional cooperation in the field of science and technology.

Third, encourage individual and institutional exchange to promote and consolidate bilateral collaboration. The regional cooperation we proposed is based and depends on the mature development of bilateral and multilateral collaborations in the region. NSFC has been attaching importance on the international and regional cooperation. Chinese scientists have been extensively involving in a great number of bilateral research collaborations in the framework of MOUs between science funding agencies.

It is therefore suggested for science funding agencies in the region to further extend more supports for their existing bilateral research programs. At same time, multilateral activities could be gradually promoted such as regional workshops and symposium, particularly seminars and summer school for young scientists in the region. The foundation is committed to encourage well-established Chinese research institutions and young scientists to work with their counterparts both for bilateral and multilateral activities in the region.

Fourth, to be open and inclusive. It should be encouraged to cooperate with other international and regional research organizations and scientific societies in the region to expand and upgrade capability of scientific and technological collaboration of the Asian countries. I hope that it could be made fully use of existing research and coordination mechanisms to broaden the mutually beneficial cooperation in the region.

It is therefore proposed to enhance exchange and coordination with other regional and international organizations such as the Federation of Asian Scientific Academies, the Societies and Science Council of Asia Conference, as well as the International Rice Research Institute and International Integrated Mountain Development Center, and regional consultation in the framework of global and international programs of big science and research, such as IGBP, WCRP and the Integrated Regional Studies (IRS) of Monsoon Asia as well. The Foundation would like to join in hand with other science funding agencies of the region to promote the development of the regional mechanism for S&T collaboration.

I am convinced that the development of regional partnership in the field of science and technology will share desire of Asian countries, serves common interests and mutual assistance among Asian countries and contribute to lasting development in Asia and the world.

I wish the second meeting of the ASIAHORCs success.

Thank you for your attention.